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BY

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The sun rises every morning. The newspaper arrives, and milk. We accept all three almost equally without question. While the consumer can derive benefits from the sun, and the cow without understanding them, the products of Fleet Street are more artificial and demand more effort if they are to be useful. This pamphlet is a miniature guide for the newspaper reader. It explains the difference between the various kinds of reading-matter in a newspaper: facts (which are, or should be, sacred), comment (which is free), 'features', and advertisements. It describes how the materials are collected from news agencies, from the newspaper's own correspondents, from free-lance correspondents, from official sources, and so on, and how they are prepared inside the newspaper office. The different types of newspaper are also described, and the varying forms of newspaper ownership. Several important problems are discussed, such as the maintenance of journalistic standards, whether owners run their papers for profit, power, or service, the influence of advertising, and the power of the press to influence public opinion.

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A C History and Prestige of the English Newspaper

THE English newspaper has played a notable part in disseminating information, moulding public opinion, and shaping policy since the reign of Charles I. For centuries it has been both the mirror and the pulse of national life. There still survive, in the full pride of life, newspapers which reported the storming of the Bastille and the victory of Trafalgar; three provincial newspapers which to-day chronicle the doings of Worcester, Nottingham, and East Anglia were first read in the coffee houses of Queen Anne's reign; and the *London Gazette*, though not a newspaper in the ordinary sense of the word, still gravely records the news of the Court as it did when first issued at Oxford in 1665.

The English newspaper is thus an institution with a history and an influence excelled only by the Church, Parliament, the Common Law, and the Crown. In the growth of British democracy the newspaper has been a fighting instrument second to none. But no newspaper can live on its past. Its continued life depends on its ability to maintain circulation, and therewith advertising revenue, in a fiercely competitive world. Not all its long history dating from 1772, nor its finely polished articles, nor its admirable paper and type, nor even its intimate connexion with the Conservative Party, could save the *Morning Post* as an independent newspaper in 1937; it had failed to move with the times and attract sufficient readers. The English newspaper is an excellent example of the principle of the survival of the fittest, where 'fittest' does not necessarily mean 'best,' but implies adaptation to environment. The newspaper which is to survive must be continually adapting itself to changing circumstances. It must be prepared

Berrow's Worcester Journal (a weekly founded in 1709 as the *Worcester Watchman*) is the oldest surviving non-official newspaper in the British Isles; the *Nottingham Journal*, published as a daily since 186, is a direct descendant of the *Weekly Courant* founded in 1710; the *Lincoln, Stamford, and Rutland Mercury* was founded in 1712-13 as the *Stamford Mercury*; more than sixty newspapers founded earlier than 1800 are still in existence.

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ruthlessly to change its paper, its type, its layout, even its personnel when they have ceased to attract, even its views when they are proved wrong, unless it wishes to be remembered for the chief reason that Queen Anne is herself remembered.

Classes of Newspapers

The British press is divided into five main classes : (1) the national daily newspapers, that is, the daily morning newspapers which have a nation-wide circulation or influence ; (2) the London evening newspapers ; (3) the provincial newspapers, morning and evening ; (4) the local newspapers, that is, the county and suburban weeklies ; and (5) the Sunday newspapers. The national daily newspapers are mainly centred in London, but six of them are printed in Manchester as well as in London, and one of the six has also an edition printed in Glasgow. There are two provincial newspapers—the *Manchester Guardian* published in Manchester and the *Yorkshire Post* published in Leeds—which have relatively small circulations, but exert by sheer ability a national influence and must be regarded as national newspapers. If it were not for the physical difficulty of distributing Scottish newspapers in the South of England, the *Edinburgh Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* might call for inclusion in the same class, and there are many other provincial journals knocking for admission. Owing to the short time available for distribution, there cannot be a national evening newspaper, but the three London evening papers are read all over the Home Counties and come nearest to the ideal.

The absence of competition from London gives the evening newspapers published in many places a status comparable with, or even greater than, the local morning newspapers ; and several ' high-class ' provincial papers have over periods been ' carried ' financially by their

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evening counterparts, notably the *Manchester Guardian*, *Yorkshire Post*, and *Birmingham Post*. The Sunday newspapers, enjoying the benefit of the long night hours for distribution, are mainly published in London or in London and Manchester,¹ but one with a huge circulation is printed in Manchester only. One of the chief differences between the British and foreign press is that here the daily newspapers appear only from Monday to Saturday; the Sunday newspaper, even when under the same financial control as a daily, is produced by a different staff and distributed by different methods and persons; it has its own set of correspondents; it is also different in its nature, giving more prominence to features and special articles. The evening 'companions' of the morning newspapers have also separate offices and staffs.

Dominance of London

Even this brief sketch will have brought out the dominance of London in the newspaper world. It is a case of London first, Manchester second, and the rest practically nowhere. With the exception of Paris, and perhaps we should add of Moscow, this dominance of London has no parallel in the great countries of the world. In Great Britain, France, and Russia,² the press is highly centralized in the capital, and circulations are correspondingly large. In the United States, Germany, and Italy, the press is decentralized, and circulations are normally much smaller. In Great Britain, this dominance of the capital is largely due to the smallness of the country and the admirable railway service, which means that a newspaper printed in London one evening can be on the breakfast table in most parts of England next morning, and can be read before lunch even in remote parts of Wales and Scotland.

¹ The *Sunday Express* in Glasgow also.

² Russia is rather different from the other two, as local versions of the all-Union newspapers are printed throughout the Union with some common features.

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In London itself the press is also highly centralized, so much so that 'Fleet Street' has become a synonym for the newspaper world. Of the big national newspapers only the *Daily Express* and *Daily Telegraph* actually abut on Fleet Street, but all the big dailies except two are printed in the adjoining streets; and even the *Daily Herald* and *Daily Sketch*, though outside the charmed area which means so much to a newspaper man, are published within a mile. So magical is the name Fleet Street that even newspapers printed only a few yards away feel it necessary to have advertisement offices with a Fleet Street frontage. In this region also are the offices of the news agencies, and the London offices of the provincial newspapers.

Although, as already indicated, the circumstances of publication are favourable to high British circulations, it is at a first glance rather surprising that London newspapers have reached the highest circulations in the world. It might be thought that the United States, with a population of 130,000,000, or the Soviet Union with a population of 180,000,000, would show circulations far in excess of the United Kingdom, with a population of 45,000,000. But density of population is more important than the total from the point of view of distributing newspapers. Before the war the biggest circulations outside the United Kingdom were approximately: *Pravda* (U.S.S.R.), 1,950,000; *Paris-soir* (France), 1,800,000; *New York Daily News* (U.S.A.), 1,718,000; *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* (Japan), 1,650,000; *Le Petit Parisien* (France), 1,650,000; and *Izvestia* (U.S.S.R.), 1,600,000. Far in excess of the highest of these circulations came the *Daily Express*, about 2,550,000 daily, and the *Daily Herald*, over 2,000,000 daily, also out-topped them all; on Sundays the *People* sold over 3,000,000 copies and the *News of the World* over 4,000,000—easily the largest circulation in the world. To achieve the

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distribution of this huge total, the first edition of the *News of the World* has to be put to press on Thursday. The *Express* reached 2,746,855 daily in February 1942.

Types of Newspapers

Though many newspapers have disappeared in recent years, the reader, unless he has special or peculiar tastes, can still find one or more to his liking. The eight big London dailies consist of two 'class' papers—*The Times* (founded 1785) and the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*; four 'popular' newspapers with circulations over a million—the *Daily Express*, *Daily Herald*, *Daily Mail*, and *News Chronicle*; and two picture papers—the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Sketch*. In addition there are two general daily newspapers with a special appeal—the *Morning Advertiser* (founded 1794), which is the organ of the Incorporated Society of Licensed Victuallers, and the *Daily Worker*, which is the Communist Party organ; and the two financial newspapers, the *Financial News* and *Financial Times*, containing some general news.

The *Daily Herald* is the official organ of the Labour Movement and the *Daily Worker* of the Communist Party. The *Daily Worker* is an aggressive political organ, but the *Daily Herald*, having a circulation twenty-five times as great, gives more prominence to general news and features. The *News Chronicle* is the result of the fusion of four former Liberal newspapers; it is independent of the Liberal Party organisation, but expresses the views of the radical element in the party, and, being independent, can often go as far to the Left as the *Daily Worker*. The *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Express* describe themselves as Independent Conservative; but the Conservatism is more marked in the *Telegraph* and the Independence in the *Mail* and the *Express*. Without official connexions, but rather by a kind of pre-established harmony, the *Telegraph* generally

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expresses the views of the Conservative Central Office. The *Mail* and the *Express* have long reflected the personal and varying views of their proprietors.'

Even with its price at threepence, *The Times* is now nearer than at any time in its long history to its ideal of being the national newspaper. The policy of *The Times* in recent decades has normally been Independent Conservative, but with a substantial measure of fair play for the Government of the day, whatever it may be. At the present time, however its policy cannot be identified with any party, but reflects the national mood more exactly than any party or other newspaper.

The *Manchester Guardian* and the *Yorkshire Post* are serious political newspapers with a national influence. Both are independent of national organizations, but the *Guardian* is the last stronghold of the Cobden School of Liberalism and the *Post* expresses 'Twixt Trent and Tweed' a progressive Conservatism.

Politics take a back page in the Sunday newspapers except in *Reynolds News*, the Co-operative organ, and in the two class papers, the *Observer* (founded 1791) and the *Sunday Times*. These two newspapers are chiefly read for their political articles, book reviews, and musical and dramatic notices; their outlook has been Independent Conservative, but both are going through a period of change in different directions. Their influence is great, but their circulations are tiny compared with those of the *News of the World* and the *People*. On the common assumption of three readers to a copy, these two newspapers must be read by half the British population, and the nature of their appeal is worth a serious social study.

The provincial press, daily and weekly, generally expresses a political attitude—Conservative, Liberal, or occasionally Labour—in its leading articles, but in its

Though it is now rather difficult to say where the ownership of the *Mail* lies.

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treatment of news and features is nearly always scrupulously fair to all parties. The local editor has to hold up a mirror to all activities in his area, whatever their political complexion. The local paper is a town's institution like market day.

Ownership of the Press

The British Press shows most conceivable types of ownership. If the *London Gazette* be included, there is one newspaper owned and published by the Crown. Most London newspapers used to be family properties, as many provincial papers still are; there is still a Walter at Printing House Square, as there was in 1785, but the controlling interest in *The Times* since 1922 has been held by Major (now Lt.-Col.) J. J. Astor; the Cadbury family has the controlling interest in the *News Chronicle* and *Star*. Other London newspapers are owned or controlled by individuals, who may in turn found dynasties like the Walters. The *Observer* is owned by Lord Astor (brother of Lt.-Col. Astor), and Lord Beaverbrook has a controlling interest in the *Daily Express*, *Evening Standard*, and *Sunday Express*. The *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* are owned by a changing body of shareholders. The *Daily Herald* is owned as to 49 per cent. of its shares by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and as to 51 per cent. by Odhams Press Ltd. *Reynolds News* is owned by the Co-operative movement; as its readers are mainly Co-operators it may broadly be said to be owned by its readers. There is to-day no actual example of co-operative-producer ownership; but newspaper staffs have sometimes been invited to subscribe to shares in their own papers—generally when these are sick unto death. The *Daily Worker* though not technically owned by the Communist Party, has been kept in existence largely by the gifts and free services of Communists. The *Morning*

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Advertiser is an isolated example of a newspaper owned on behalf of a trade—by the Incorporated Society of Licensed Victuallers.

Newspaper Groups

The chief feature of newspaper finance in the present century has been the growth of combines controlling chains of newspapers. First in time and in the ramifications of its interests¹ is the Harmsworth Group, to which the main inheritance of the two brothers Harmsworth (Viscount Northcliffe and the first Viscount Rothermere) has descended. The principal company is Associated Newspapers Ltd., which owns the *Daily Mail*, *Overseas Daily Mail*, *Sunday Dispatch*, and the London *Evening News*; through subsidiary companies it owns or controls eight provincial evening newspapers and six provincial weeklies; and it has a substantial holding in Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co., Ltd., with which it has an agreement to take all its requirements of newsprint (the paper on which newspapers are printed) until 1958. The group's provincial newspapers are published in Cheltenham, Derby, Gloucester, Grimsby, Hanley, Hull, and Swansea. A very substantial percentage of the capital of Associated Newspapers Ltd. is held by Daily Mail and General Trust Ltd. Viscount Rothermere is chairman of both companies, but his financial interest is not such as to give him control of the newspapers in the group. His father, the late Lord Rothermere, did exercise through personal influence a considerable measure of control over the whole group, especially over the *Daily Mail*; and he also is believed to direct that newspaper fairly closely.

Until 1937 it was accurate to speak of a Berry group controlled by the two brothers, Lord Camrose and

¹ These interests are not so extensive now as they were a few years ago, when the *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Pictorial* also belonged to the group. These two financially inter-locked papers are now owned by a continually changing body of shareholders, except for a block of holdings held by banks on behalf of unknown persons; these nominee holdings amount only to a minority interest.

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Lord Kemsley, and at one period the group had a fierce competition in the provinces with the Harmsworth group. But in 1937 the two brothers divided their interests. Lord Camrose is now the proprietor and editor-in-chief of the *Daily Telegraph* and controls the *Financial Times*. Lord Kemsley owns or controls one London national morning paper (*Daily Sketch*), three national Sunday papers published in London and Manchester (*Sunday Times*, *Sunday Graphic*, and *Sunday Chronicle*), another national Sunday newspaper published in Manchester (*Empire News*), two less famous Sunday papers, six provincial dailies, seven provincial evening papers, and six provincial weeklies. Lord Kemsley's main provincial interests are in Manchester, Glasgow, Cardiff, Tyneside, Aberdeen, and Sheffield. His control is exercised through Allied Newspapers Ltd., which in turn controls Allied Northern Newspapers Ltd., Associated Scottish Newspapers Ltd., and Daily Sketch and Sunday Graphic Ltd.

Another important chain of provincial newspapers is that owned by Westminster Press Provincial Newspapers Ltd., formerly known as the Starmer Group after its then Managing Director, the late Sir Charles W. Starmer. This group consists of four morning, nine evening, one Sunday, and twenty-eight county weekly newspapers, some of which issue localized editions. The centres of publication are mainly in the Midlands, Yorkshire, and Durham. The Cowdray family has financial control, and the Rowntrees are represented on the board. The policy of the newspapers, stated some years ago, was as follows :—

‘That, generally speaking, the associated newspapers should advocate Liberal principles in local and national government, especially Free Trade, League of Nations, Economy, and Social Reform. They seek to advance the Liberal spirit in people and institutions.’

Profit, Power, or Service ?

The growing concentration of ownership has led to fears that the British Press will cease to be an organ of public opinion in all its varying moods, and will become the instrument on which one or a few Press Lords will call the tune. The danger is real, but so far remains hypothetical. Not only is there every variety of ownership in the British Press, but there are many forms of relationship between proprietor and newspaper. In the case of the *Daily Herald* it is laid down that the political and industrial policy shall be that of the Labour Party and the T.U.C. ; should a dispute arise between the T.U.C. and the other directors, it may be referred to a referee or referees of high legal standing. Lord Beaverbrook, it is true, uses his newspapers as organs of personal opinion, but his intervention is capricious rather than constant ; and his puckish nature welcomes even in his own papers articles and cartoons attacking or ridiculing his policies. Lord Camrose takes a keen personal interest in the *Daily Telegraph*, but he is editor-in-chief as well as proprietor. Lt.-Col. Astor, on the other hand, leaves editorial control of *The Times* in the hands of its editor, and some proprietors make it a practice to intervene only on such occasions as a change of editor. Nor can it be generally maintained that the Press to-day is in undesirable hands. The Astors, Cadburys, and Rowntrees, to mention only three instances, can point to a family tradition of public service which fits them as well as anyone to be the guardians of public opinion.

The standard of ownership may not always remain at its present level. To prevent *The Times* from falling into undesirable hands its proprietors have made an arrangement whereby any transfer of shares in The Times Holding Co., Ltd., needs the consent of a body of trustees consisting of the Lord Chief Justice, the Warden of All Souls College, Oxford, the President of the Royal

Society, the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, and the Governor of the Bank of England. While such 'self-denying ordinances' on the part of public-minded proprietors are to be welcomed, limits are imposed on an owner's power to do evil by the necessity of retaining readers and advertisers in face of the competition of the B.B.C. and of other newspapers. The value of this restraint has been diminished, however, by the disappearance of so many independent newspapers; and the foundation of new papers in independent hands is greatly to be desired. Unfortunately the cost of producing newspapers has risen so greatly in the present century that the foundation of a new national organ is prohibitive except to the wealthiest individuals or corporations. It is said that over £2,000,000 had to be spent before the *Daily Herald* was firmly established as a national daily. The *Daily Worker* has maintained itself in existence without a large capital, but not on a paying basis. It does, however, show a way which other groups can follow if they have sufficient enthusiasm.

Why are would-be owners willing to risk so much? Is it a desire for profit, or a lust for power, or the motive of service? The profit motive is bound to be a factor in those newspapers owned by the public such as the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*, but elsewhere it hardly operates. Lt.-Col. Astor bought his holding in *The Times* as an act of public service; Lord Camrose, it is believed, runs the *Daily Telegraph* primarily as a means of influencing public opinion; and though surpluses have been made, they are incidental. Lord Beaverbrook could have made large sums out of his newspapers, but it has been his deliberate policy to use any surplus for development. The case of the Cadbury group is specially interesting. The majority holding in the *News Chronicle* and *Star* is held by a trust, and dividends received by the trust can be used only for developing the existing

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newspapers, for improving the conditions of the staff, for founding and acquiring new papers, or for charitable purposes. Of course, the motive of influencing public opinion or furthering personal ambitions can be quite as anti-social as the profit-motive, but it is interesting to notice how small a part is played by the profit-motive to-day in the production of newspapers, and how genuine is the motive of public service. Even where the profit-motive operates, Stock Exchange valuations show that the public regard newspapers as speculative ventures. It is, in fact, far easier to make a loss than a profit out of a national newspaper.

Agencies and Correspondents

The staff of a newspaper office imposes a further limit on the power of proprietors to make changes. Lord Northcliffe never succeeded in moulding the staff of Printing House Square to his will. It is the journalists in the last resort who are the most important element in the production of a newspaper. They attract and retain the readers whom the advertisers wish to reach ; it is their work which moulds opinion or shapes policy or provides the proprietors' profits.

Not all newspaper workers are journalists. For every journalist, about nine other workers are needed in the managerial, advertisement, composing, printing, circulation, and distributing staffs. There are two broad divisions of journalists—those who provide the 'copy' and those who prepare it for the press.

A newspaper derives its news from two main sources : it has its own staff of reporters and correspondents, and it shares the services of one or more news agencies with other newspapers. The big news agencies are able to maintain far larger staffs than a newspaper office can do, and they cover all events of importance. The special qualities demanded of news agencies are speed and

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trustworthiness. Being intended for many newspapers of contrasted outlook, the reports of news agencies are best when they are colourless and are often bound to be longer than can be printed—so that each newspaper can select according to taste. These reports normally come into the office by means of the tape machine—a teleprinter; and the service is so rapid that the result of a big race, it has been truly said, is known in every newspaper office before the jockeys have had time to dismount.

Six main agencies are used in Great Britain. The *Press Association* provides home news of all types, but does not touch overseas news. It is an association of the provincial newspapers founded in 1870 and governed by a board of seven directors drawn from the member-newspapers; but the London newspapers also subscribe to its services. *Reuters* specializes in overseas news. It was founded by Paul Julius Reuter at Aachen in 1847, but in 1851 its headquarters were moved to London, and in 1865 it was converted into a limited company. There being a danger in 1915 that it might fall into unfriendly hands, Sir Roderick Jones converted it into a private trust. Ten years later the Press Association agreed to accept the ownership of Reuters. The Newspaper Proprietors Association (that is, the society of London proprietors) was not willing at the time to share the ownership, but in 1941 it acquired a half-share in the agency from the Press Association. Reuters is now governed by a board partly nominated by the P.A., partly by the N.P.A., and there is a body of trustees.

The *Exchange Telegraph* is a widely-used British agency providing home and overseas news. *Central News*, founded in 1880, was under American control from 1908 to 1937, but then reverted to British control. The *British United Press* is the British counterpart of the United Press Associations of America. The *Associated Press* is another big American agency which is much

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used. In addition there are a number of smaller but useful specialized news agencies.

Newspapers could be wholly produced (several times over in fact) from material supplied daily by the agencies, but newspapers thus produced would differ little from each other and would be so dull as not to be worth buying. Individuality and colour are provided by the newspaper's own staff. This consists in the first place of its full-time reporters at the head office ; they work under the News Editor, who gives them each day their assignments. At the head office also are the higher reporters described as correspondents—Political, Diplomatic, Ecclesiastical, Dramatic, and so on—who are given the responsibility for gathering news within a special field ; often they enjoy the confidence of the highest persons in the land, and it is necessary not only to read their lines, but between their lines.

A special place of honour, as of responsibility, used to be held by the staff of reporters working in the Press Galleries of Parliament. Nowadays *The Times* is the only newspaper to maintain its own gallery staff ; other newspapers depend on agency reports and sketch writers. The Press uses four types of persons to act as channels between Parliament and the public :

(1) the gallery man, who takes a straightforward shorthand note ;

(2) the sketch writer, who gives an impression of the debate ;

(3) the lobby correspondent, who keeps close contact with Ministers and other Members, and writes about future developments ; and

(4) the leader writer, who expresses his newspaper's opinion.

All are necessary in the great work of moulding democratic opinion, but the decline in the straightforward reporting of serious speeches, and the premium put on bright or

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startling interventions must give cause for some apprehension.

A staff of reporters is similarly kept at the Law Courts. The law reporters of *The Times* are required to be barristers, and the published volumes of *The Times Law Reports* are accepted as authentic records of judgements.

Under the News Editor there are also correspondents in a large number of provincial towns who normally receive their assignments, and send in their copy, by telegraph and telephone. For overseas news there is a Foreign News Editor who has the oversight of the newspaper's correspondents abroad. Distant messages are sent in by telegram (cable or radio), but messages from European capitals are (or were in peace-time) normally sent over the telephone and taken down in shorthand or by dictaphone. For the chief news centres it is convenient to have a call at a fixed time every evening, supplemented where necessary by special calls. In one office differently coloured lamps in various parts of the building show when Paris, Berlin, Rome or Brussels is 'on the line' so that interested members of the staff may listen in.

A newspaper's correspondents, whether at home or overseas, may be full-time staff men, and required to work exclusively for the newspaper; in such cases their messages are described (where the personal name is not used) as 'From Our Own Correspondent'. But correspondents in the less important centres are paid a retaining fee *plus* space rates for so much of their messages as is printed; such correspondents are free to do other work, and at home they are usually on the staff of a local newspaper; their messages may be described as 'From Our Correspondent'. When a newspaper sends one of its staff on a special mission, his messages are described as 'From Our Special Correspondent'. A message headed 'From A Correspondent' indicates that it has

been accepted from an outside contributor ; and ' From A Special Correspondent ' indicates that an outside contributor has been asked to cover some subject or event for which he has special qualifications. The distinction between staff men and outside contributors is jealously preserved in newspaper offices, for with it go remuneration and status. It has been agreed that no fully qualified reporter or sub-editor, by which is meant a reporter or sub-editor who has served in that capacity for at least three years, shall be paid for exclusive full-time services on a London daily or evening newspaper less than nine guineas a week, plus a war bonus of 7*s.* 6*d.* a week ; in the provinces, the minimum salary for a fully qualified reporter or sub-editor is graded from £5 3*s.* 6*d.* to £6 15*s.* a week (inclusive of war bonuses). The outside contributor is paid by space, that is to say, by the number of inches of his copy printed, not by what he writes, or by special commission or by a stipulated fee for each day that he is employed. Frequently the outside contributor is a free-lance journalist making a living by writing for many papers ; the life of a free-lance is independent but precarious, and no one should embark upon it without an understanding of its hardships, which are equalled among the professions only by the stage.

Sub-Editors

From all these sources a vast jumble of copy pours into newspaper offices every day—written, typed, printed, telegraphed, or telephoned. It is prepared for the press by sub-editors, who may work together under a Chief Sub-Editor, or, in a large office, are divided into home, foreign, sporting, and city. Their work consists of selection, compression, correction of fact, and improvement of style, the translation of telegraphese into English, elucidation where necessary, the choice of type, and the writing of headings. The selection among the copy is

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done by a copy-taster, who discards some by putting it on 'the spike' and passes the remainder to his colleagues with a hasty assessment of its importance, *e.g.* in the form of a letter or number indicating the type of heading it is to receive; the selection within the copy itself is done by the sub-editor, who passes the sub-edited copy to the Chief Sub-Editor for approval or revision. The sub-editor's work is the most exacting and exasperating (and not the least important) in a newspaper office; it calls for a combination of speed, accuracy, and encyclopædic knowledge, together with a flair for news. In the nature of the case there is tension between correspondents (or reporters) and sub-editors, for the sub-editors deplore the verbosity of correspondents, while the correspondents weep to see their best passages slashed.

Features and Leaders

A newspaper, however, does not consist solely of news. An increasingly large place in the modern newspaper is taken by 'features.' One of the oldest and most distinctive features of British newspapers is the correspondence column. Letters to the editor of *The Times* are a unique feature in journalism. In the form of letters, the editor of that journal frequently receives free contributions for which other newspapers would gladly pay large sums. Other features of *The Times* are its authoritative 'turnover article,' so called because in peace-time it began on the middle right-hand page and ended on the back of that page; and its obituary notices, generally prepared by expert hands long before the need for use. Most newspaper offices keep a large 'graveyard,' as the stock of obituary notices is irreverently called.

While not ignoring these features, other newspapers make a speciality of features which the austere guardians of *The Times* have hitherto avoided. In the *Daily*

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Telegraph, whose letters and special articles are second in influence only to those of *The Times*, a place of honour is held by the daily paragraphs of social and political gossip which appear over the pseudonym 'Peterborough'. The columnist is now gaining in this country a position equal to that which he holds in the United States. Most newspapers now have columnists, who generally exhibit a marked individuality of style and have a wide following. The cartoon is another popular innovation; it may be political, or light, or tell a story in the form of a 'strip' of pictures. The cartoonists are allowed a surprisingly free pen, and their political comment is often worth columns of leading articles.

Apart from news and features, a newspaper must have its leading articles. In the popular newspapers, it may be suspected that these, like the human appendix, are an obsolete survival and to-day exist only because that part of the paper has always been devoted to opinion. The space allowed to them is usually too short for an argument to be properly developed. But in the high-class papers, especially *The Times*, *Telegraph*, *Manchester Guardian*, and *Yorkshire Post*, the leaders are still written with care. Indeed, the leading articles of *The Times* are studied by Governments throughout the world, and sometimes have an effect far greater than was intended by their authors, e.g. that of 7 September 1938, suggesting the possibility of a settlement between Czechoslovakia and Germany through the agreed cession of the Sudetenland. In the British Press, leading articles are unsigned because they express, not the views of an individual, but the policy of the paper.

Pictures and Advertisements

An important development of the twentieth century is the provision of pictures as a complement to news and features. After some hesitation, the high-class papers

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followed the lead of the popular papers in this respect, and the picture-department is now one of the most highly developed sides of a newspaper office. A newspaper keeps a large library of photographs, and in addition photographers, like reporters, are liable to be sent at a moment's notice on special assignments, in which they always display skill, sometimes audacity, and often courage.

The news, features, leaders, and pictures comprise the editorial elements in a newspaper. While these are being prepared, the advertisement staff is filling its side of the paper. One of the most necessary tasks in a newspaper is to preserve a proper balance between the space allotted to advertisements and that assigned to editorial matter. In peace-time, the amount of advertising matter received determines the number of pages in the paper; in war-time, with limited paper supplies, it is necessary to ration advertisements. British newspapers attempt to preserve a rigid distinction between advertisements and editorial matter, and the two staffs are quite distinct. But puffs of advertised articles will occasionally appear in the editorial columns, and sometimes the advertisements—*e.g.* the social and financial announcements in *The Times*—contain news of wide interest.

Journalistic Standards

There are not more than 10,000 journalists in Great Britain, of whom about 7,000 are members of the National Union of Journalists and 3,000 are members of the Institute of Journalists; some are members of both and some of neither. The Institute, incorporated by a Royal Charter, admits editors and journalist-proprietors (in their capacity as journalists) to its membership, whereas the N.U.J. frowns upon them. (London owners are organized in the Newspaper Proprietors Association, and provincial owners in the Newspaper Society.) Both

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the N.U.J. and the Institute are trade unions in different senses of the phrase. But the N.U.J. is affiliated (through its membership of the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation) to the Trades Union Congress whereas the Institute aims at making Journalism a profession analogous in its standards to the Bar or Medicine. The N.U.J. aims at 'the closed shop', *i.e.* it would like to see membership of the N.U.J. compulsory in every newspaper office: the Institute has promoted a Bill for the statutory registration of journalists.

The maintenance of professional standards in journalism is not less vital than in the other professions. A careless doctor may poison one person, but a careless or malicious correspondent can poison the minds of millions and embitter the relations of countries. In matters of personal integrity the British journalist is admittedly above reproach. Unlike some of his continental colleagues, he cannot be bribed directly, and is seldom caught by the indirect bribery of expensive luncheons, flattery, and so on. What he puts into the paper, or leaves out, is dictated solely by journalistic considerations of which the greatest is news-value, and a sense for what constitutes news is the journalist's greatest gift.

The first duty of a newspaper is to give the news and give it quickly. That duty is discharged by the British Press with admirable technical skill. The only major suppression of news in recent years was the action of newspapers for some months in making no mention of King Edward VIII's friendship with Mrs. Ernest Simpson; but this was a spontaneous action by each newspaper without pressure or agreement. The London Press also avoids the so-called cardinal sin of journalism—it is never dull. But speed and brightness do not always conduce to accuracy; and misleading reports, misleading headings, and even downright errors are commoner to-day than good journalists would wish.

Moreover, is all the news 'fit to print'? A few years ago justifiable complaints were made against certain journals with aggressive news-gathering policies for their 'intrusion into private grief'. There are also journals to-day, especially Sunday organs with huge circulations, which probe with unnecessary zeal into the more sordid proceedings of the Courts.

It is not correct to say that the Press has been degraded by Northcliffe's new journalistic methods. Class journalism to-day has an aggregate circulation greater than ever before, and its quality has not diminished. The popular press caters for a reading community which did not exist in the nineteenth century, a community brought into existence by compulsory education. But the controllers of the popular press have not kept pace with the gradual rise in the level of knowledge and taste throughout the community. 'Sport, crime, and women' is still the mixture as formerly prescribed, except for an added dash of astrology. The success of such periodicals as *Picture Post* shows that the public will respond to something better. Slowly, but surely, universal elementary education, and the great expansion of secondary education, are beginning to raise the general level of intelligence and criticism throughout the community. The B.B.C. realizes it; the publishers of the Penguin and similar editions realize it; a fortune awaits the newspaper proprietor who realizes that public taste has gone up, not down, since Northcliffe's day.

Influence of Advertising

A charge often heard is that advertisers exert great influence over editorial matter. It gains plausibility from the well-known fact that newspapers look to advertising for a great part of their revenue; popular newspapers draw about half of their revenue from advertisements, and class newspapers three-quarters or more.

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Against this may be set the fact that newspapers which used to carry advertisements on the front page—a highly remunerative position—have one by one given it to news. The *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Sunday Times*, and *Observer* have all done so in recent years. To-day *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Morning Advertiser* are the only national papers giving the whole front page to advertisements.

It is difficult to find evidence of direct attempts by advertisers to influence editorial matter. Dr. Max Grunbeck declares, 'When Lord Rothermere's papers gave vigorous support for a time to the Fascist movement in England, their initiative was throttled in a few weeks by their advertising department.' If this were true, it might be an argument for control through advertising. Organized pressure is sometimes said to have been exercised by certain trades through a threat to withdraw advertisements. The indirect influence of advertising is more subtle and more extensive. A newspaper that receives a large revenue from company prospectuses may have an unconscious bias in favour of our present financial system; and the paper carrying frequent advertisements of patent medicines may, without any conscious deviation from rectitude, give too little weight to the medical profession's views on such goods. A famous editor has, indeed, written unashamedly of 'such needless folly as putting the report of a fatal motor smash alongside of a motor advertisement'. But examples of deliberate refusal to be influenced can be cited on the other side, such as leading articles supporting the Coal Bill, 1938, notwithstanding advertisements in a contrary sense inserted in the same issue by the mineowners.

The famous 'safe milk' advertisement of the British Medical Association introduces a different principle. It is a salutary principle of newspapers not to admit 'knocking' advertisements, that is, copy which attacks

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other advertised goods, because such copy tends to discredit all advertising. When the B.M.A. in 1938 began a campaign against milk that was not tuberculin-tested or pasteurized, it applied to the newspapers for space for an advertisement headed, 'Is All Milk Safe?' The Newspaper Proprietors' Association objected to the form of the advertisement, partly on the grounds that it 'knocked' the advertisements of the milk industry, but also on grounds of public policy, as being likely to cause panic and prejudicial to the national milk campaign. In the end the B.M.A. agreed to modify the offending features of the advertisement, and in its modified form it was printed by most of the London dailies.

These examples show that while direct control by advertisers might become dangerous, the danger is hypothetical. It must be remembered that there are limits to what an advertiser can do. If he withdraws his advertisements, he not only hits the newspaper but hits himself. And what are the alternatives? In France, where advertising revenue is low, the newspapers have often been forced to rely on subsidies from powerful interests, from their own government or even from foreign governments. As the other source of a newspaper's revenue is sales, it might be thought that the remedy lies in increased circulation. But this can never be wholly true, because newsprint is normally the biggest item in the cost of a newspaper¹, and the cost of newsprint per copy is substantially the same for a million copies as for 100,000—for each copy contains the same amount of paper. In any case, nothing does so much to lower the tone of a newspaper as the scramble for big circulation. In matters of policy, a popular newspaper

¹ Between 30 and 40 per cent. for a popular newspaper; see the interesting figures for the *Daily Express* and two hypothetical dailies given in the P.E.P. *Report on the British Press*, pp. 72-76. The alternatives here presented between advertising revenue and sales revenue is not meant to be pressed, as a higher circulation enables advertising rates to be put up, and the main object of the circulation war was to obtain high net sales certificates to impress advertisers.

inevitably tries to please everybody and offend none ; in matters of taste, it tends to follow the conversational rule of Sir Robert Walpole—' to talk bawdy, so that everyone can join in '. The ' circulation war ' a few years ago led to a deplorable lowering of the tone of the popular press and the introduction of a host of unjournalistic practices—free insurance, gifts of books, and wholesale canvassing for new readers. The cost of these practices was a heavy burden to newspapers : it was commonly put at a guinea a head, but this was probably an understatement, and some provincial newspapers paid as much as £8 a head for additional readers. While this ' circulation war ' raged, some wit pointed out how appropriate it was that the patron saint of journalists should be St. Francis de Sales !

Power of the Press

This raises the whole question of the power of the Press to influence public opinion. A newspaper which makes circulation its main object inevitably tends to supply its readers with what they want, or with what the newspaper thinks they want ; otherwise they may take their pennies elsewhere. Thus the *Daily Express* appeared throughout 1938 and as late as July 1939 with the slogan, ' There will be no European war involving Britain this year, or next year either '. It retained its readership, but the *Daily Mail*, which for a time advocated the unpopular cause of authoritarianism lost several hundred thousand readers in the process. It is a source of perpetual debate in the Labour movement whether the *Daily Herald* is a more effective political organ to-day than when its circulation was a tenth of its present size. The *News Chronicle* makes a feature of the British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup Survey), and it is curious how closely what the paper advocates approximates to what the public wants (as shown by the Survey).

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An effective test of the power of the popular press came in 1930-31 when the whole Beaverbrook and Rothermere Press challenged Mr. (now Lord) Baldwin's leadership of the Conservative Party; Mr. Baldwin won a complete victory against the 'engines of propaganda for the constantly changing policies, desires, personal wishes, personal likes and personal dislikes of two men'.¹

The power of the Press to influence opinion and policy is, in fact, almost in inverse proportion to circulation, though the rule is not mathematically exact. *The Times* has great influence on policy, because its readers are nearly all centres of influence or in a position to shape policy—members of the legislature, the executive, and the judicial profession, teachers and clergy, local government officials, and so on. *The Daily Telegraph* is a power in the Conservative Party; its revolt against 'appeasement' was a significant stage in the abandonment of that policy. *The Manchester Guardian*, with a circulation of about 60,000, is quietly turned over in many minds that control events. *The Yorkshire Post* set in motion the events leading up to the abdication of King Edward VIII; yet its circulation at the time was not more than 35,000.

News and Views

In theory all British newspapers make a rigid distinction between news and comment. The newspaper's own views are to be found day by day in the same place in the paper, and the accepted ideal is that of C. P. Scott, the great editor of the *Manchester Guardian*: 'Comment is free, but facts are sacred'. In practice, however, there is no such thing as complete objectivity in the presentation of news. The position on the page, the choice of type and lay-out, and the headlines will differ according to the outlook of the persons responsible for them. Sometimes

¹ Speech quoted in *The Times*, 18 March 1931. It was at this time that the mob went round Fleet Street, 'Mr. Baldwin has resigned and Lord Beaverbrook has sent for the King'.

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this personal element distorts the basic report, but the distortion is more often unconscious than conscious. Critics are apt to attribute to deliberate malice what is more probably due to the speed at which newspaper staffs work. Brighter methods in the presentation of news have come to stay and have influenced even the more sober journals. They are not in themselves evil: it was just as wrong of *The Times* to report the battle of Waterloo in the bottom of the right-hand column without a heading as it was for the *Sketch* and *Mirror* on 12 February 1938 to 'splash' all over their front page an earl's hunting accident.

Effect of the War

The war brought great changes to newspapers. The Ministry of Information was immediately set up, and acts as a clearing house for the transmission to newspapers of Government news—which in war-time means some of the most important news. Its large hall in Bloomsbury, where most newspapers keep a representative by day and many by night, is the biggest press club in the world. The Ministry, through its Press and Censorship Bureau, also acts as a censor of news received by newspapers from other sources. Newspapers are under no obligation to submit news before publication, but as they would expose themselves to penalties for publishing news of certain types, they take the opinion of the Bureau in all doubtful cases. Comment is not submitted to the Censor. After many early cases of friction, the system is now working as well as any system of censorship can be expected to work.

From the reader's point of view, the most important change has been a reduction in the supply of newsprint to about 20 per cent. of pre-war consumption. The fall of Norway cut off a major source of supply. In order to meet the new position, the chief proprietors formed the

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Newsprint Supply Company, which bought some ships of its own and also used existing ships to bring newsprint and pulp from Canada ; and the salvage of paper for re-pulping has been developed to a high degree. Newspapers have met the cut in newsprint mainly by a cut in the number of pages, but partly also by a smaller page and thinner paper, and by a reduction in circulation through refusing to accept ' returns ' from newsagents. Various ruses, such as more columns to the page and smaller type, have been used to eke out space. The reduced size has meant a corresponding rationing of advertisements and an increase in advertising rates, which has helped to meet the vastly increased cost of newsprint. The need to limit circulation has made it possible for newspapers to drop canvassing and free insurance schemes, and other unjournalistic features, such as competitions, have been much reduced. On the reader's side, the eighteenth-century habit of sharing newspapers has been revived.

It would not be possible to cut the size of newspapers further without destroying their character as newspapers, and any new reduction in supplies of newsprint could be met only by a reduction in sales. This would mean a serious interference with the freedom of the printed word, for the public demand cannot be met even to-day, and a further cut in sales would mean that many people would not be free to read the news and views of their choice. In the interests of the democratic way of life for which we are fighting, the maintenance of supplies of newsprint, with the present figure as an irreducible minimum, deserves to be made a point of national policy.

The reduction in size, allied with the return of so many overseas correspondents, has enabled newspapers to yield many of their younger staff to the Services ; and many newspaper men are also serving as war correspondents or photographers with the Forces, sharing all

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the dangers of the serving-man's life. War-time newspapers go to press several hours earlier than in peace-time. Several offices suffered from bombing, but in each case the next issue appeared without the readers being aware that anything was unusual. It is remarkable that in over three years of war no British newspaper has failed to appear through enemy action.

The one casualty has been of a different order. Defence Regulation 2D authorizes the Home Secretary to suppress a paper that systematically publishes matter calculated to foment opposition to the successful prosecution of the war. The *Daily Worker*, which began by applauding the war against Hitlerism, decided within a few weeks that this was an imperialist war, and on 21 January 1941, it was suppressed. The German attack on the Soviet Union has subsequently convinced the editorial board that the war is not imperialist, and the ban was lifted on 26 August 1942; publication was resumed on 7 September. A warning that the Regulation might be applied was given to the *Daily Mirror* in March 1942, and provoked heated debate, as it appeared to some people that the only offence of the *Mirror* was to have criticized the Government too strongly.

Press and Government

As the community becomes more planned, the relationship of the newspapers with the Government is likely to give rise to many problems. In early days British newspapers, including *The Times*, accepted subsidies from the Government, and the Government called the tune. The independence which they achieved in the early nineteenth century has not since been lost and is the greatest safeguard of the democratic way of life. But the freedom of the Press had been threatened even in peace-time. The Official Secrets Acts, unknown to our grandfathers, have been stretched beyond their

purpose by the executive, and the Incitement to Disaffection Act of 1934 makes it possible to proceed against a newspaper, not for an offence which it has committed, but for an offence which it may commit.

Among the links between the Government and the Press to-day are the Public Relations Officers maintained by the departments. They are a recent development and fulfil a useful function by giving newspapers an early explanation of the significance of official announcements. But the danger that the independence of the Press may be sapped through this connexion is obvious ; it is only a small step from advice to instruction, but that step is all the way from a free to a totalitarian press. Moreover, the Public Relations Officers have sometimes regarded their main job as the 'boosting' of their Minister, while the 'hand out', that is, the prepared statement handed to the Press, kills good journalism. The Foreign Office sets a model to other Ministries in this respect. Its News Department holds daily conferences with Diplomatic Correspondents, either individually, or in small groups ; and the material obtained depends largely on the correspondent's skill in putting the right questions and on the confidence which his handling of material inspires. From the newspaper side, a safeguard is to maintain as many alternative sources of news as possible, and especially a highly-qualified staff of correspondents overseas. There is room for much improvement in the overseas representation of the Press. No complaint can be made against *The Times*, which maintains an unequalled organization of overseas correspondents. But too many editors think that any crime reporter is good enough to send abroad, without any previous understanding of the country to which he is sent. It needs to be realized that the representative of a newspaper in a foreign capital holds a post equal in responsibility to the diplomatic representatives ; he is, in fact, an ambassador

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from a people to a people, not from a government to a government. In justice, it should be added that, despite the haphazard way in which they have been selected, the overseas correspondents come out of the stern test of the past twenty years much better than the diplomatists. Led by such men as Mr. Norman Ebbutt of *The Times*, they were prompt to realize the unappeasable nature of Hitlerism; and there is now no harm in revealing that Mr. Churchill's denunciation of appeasement was in great part based on the private warnings of newspaper men.

The relationship of the Press to the B.B.C. is an allied problem, for the B.B.C., while given considerable day-to-day liberty, is in the last resort a Government instrument. The Press is to-day jealous of the B.B.C., and especially of any favouritism in the matter of Government news; it would also oppose the further development of an independent service of news correspondents by the B.B.C. (at present the B.B.C. has some correspondents of its own, and also relays or re-broadcasts messages from American radio correspondents, but it is still mainly dependent on the news agencies). But considered simply as agencies of information, apart from their relationship to the Government, the interests of the Press and the B.B.C. are not inimical. The hearing of an item in the B.B.C. news often leads to a desire to see it more fully presented, and commented upon, perhaps with pictures, in the next morning's paper. The Press is perhaps unduly suspicious of this great new source of information.

